

But still DELAY presses on. Next he claimed that redistricting is necessary to increase the number of minority districts in Texas. That, too, is flat wrong. In fact, his plan to redraw congressional districts would dilute minority voting strength statewide. It would splinter Hispanic communities all along the southwest Texas border region. It would suppress the voices of millions of Hispanics living along the Texas border and give their representation to areas in central Texas. That is why the proposed redistricting plan blatantly violates the Voting Rights Act and the U.S. Constitution.

In south Texas, border cities such as McAllen, Texas, in my 15th Congressional District are cut up into as many as three different congressional districts and grouped with residents of downtown Austin, Texas. It gerrymanders the 15th Congressional District so that it looks like a serpent that wiggles around the State of Texas for a distance of more than 400 miles with its head in Austin and its tail end in the border towns of Hidalgo County. Just look at the map. It was featured on CNN today. It starts here on the border in Hidalgo County, and it wiggles all the way around like this, all the way to Austin, Texas, for about 450 miles. That is the worst gerrymandering that has ever happened in the State of Texas, and that happens to be my congressional district. All this in order to increase the number of Republican Representatives in the Congress.

Obviously the Democratic State representatives had no voice in the development of this redistricting plan, nor did citizens throughout Texas have an opportunity to speak out on this new congressional district map. That is why these 53 Texas representatives have broken quorum, the only option available to them, to stop this partisan power grab by TOM DELAY. That is why every major newspaper in the State of Texas has editorialized against the new redistricting map. The Waco Tribune Herald said it best: "The map is a travesty that shatters the community of interest that is the foundation of congressional redistricting. It's a Machiavellian scheme that should be soundly defeated."

And the McAllen Monitor, the newspaper in my district, said it very succinctly: "This crooked plan uses crooked lines to achieve twisted goals."

Clearly the citizens of Texas support the existing congressional district lines not just for the 2002 election, but for 2004 and every election after that through 2010 when the constitutionally mandated redistricting process will take place again.

The current district lines are fair to both parties and comply with the Voting Rights Act. If TOM DELAY wants to increase Republican representation, he should seek to do so at the ballot box, not by hammering the legislature into changing the rules of the game in a way that would be extremely disruptive

to our communities, our legislature and our State.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I stand here in solidarity with these 53 courageous Texas State representatives, especially those from south Texas: Kino Flores, Jim Solis, Rene Oliveira, Aaron Pena, Miguel Wise, Ryan Guillen and Juan Escobar. To all 53: We support you. We salute you.

TEXAS REDISTRICTING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, I want to add my voice of explanation to what is happening in Texas and Oklahoma this week. It seems to be high drama. We Texans pride ourselves on a good old-fashioned, blood-racing, heart-pumping showdown at the OK Corral. It is no wonder the Nation's media has joined the audience for the show. But if anybody thinks this week's actions are nothing more than a real-life alternative to the afternoon TV soaps, they need to look a little closer and understand just what principles are motivating both sides in this showdown.

From the Republican side, it is the principle that says to the winner go the spoils. I am willing to go with this idea to a point, as my colleague the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BARTON) mentioned a moment ago. We Democrats certainly enjoyed our spoils for decades when Texas was already a one-party State. It just happened the one party was Democrats rather than Republicans. Acting within the rules and dedicated to the best outcome for its citizens, the majority party would be foolish not to maximize its power to accomplish its goals.

The key phrase of what I just said was "acting within the rules and dedicated to the best outcome for its citizens." That is where I believe the Republicans' principle has become unprincipled.

For the past 2 days, reporters have been asking me if I think it is the right thing for Texas legislators to go on the lam in Oklahoma rather than doing their jobs in Austin. Of course I think that would have been preferable, and so do they. But when legislators do not have a prayer of doing their jobs not because they do not want to, but because the rules have been abused and rigged against them, I do not see what alternative those legislators have but to bring as much sunlight as possible into the rigged process.

Do not forget the context in which this is taking place in Texas, a \$10 billion plus shortfall. I know the State House must be hearing from schoolteachers, health care providers, social workers, and dozens of other worried citizen groups, because I am hearing from them. A normal taxpayer would think with problems like we have in Texas, you would not have needed to pick another fight. But rather than

grapple with those major problems affecting millions of Texans, our State legislators got harassed and harangued so long by Washington that they finally gave in.

□ 1815

Mr. DELAY finally convinced them to buy the kind of partisan poison, single-minded, rule-rigged brand of leadership that he has perfected here in Washington in this House of Representatives.

I understand the frustration of the 53 in Oklahoma, and I understand how it feels to be prevented from having their voices heard; to have their ideas kept out of the arena, for they would not prevail as we Blue Dogs have time and time again. I understand hearings hastily called at inconvenient times, witness lists unnecessarily shortened. I understand the frustration. Mr. DELAY knew how to advise the Texas legislature because he is practicing effectively the same tactics right here in this body.

I will admit that so far in Washington my wife has not yet been trailed by Federal officers or my daughter followed to the hospital as she gives birth to my grandchild. I find this extreme use or abuse of power particularly distressing. Mr. DELAY is quoted as saying, "I have never turned tail and run." But neither have the Democrats in Ardmore, Mr. Speaker. When their hands have been tied, their mouths have been gagged and their eyes blindfolded, they had to be creative in finding a new way to fight under the rules. They are standing and fighting for what they believe in a far more courageous way than are required by rigging the rules of the game. They are playing by the rules.

History has shown that "might makes right" is a philosophy which might work in the short term, but ultimately is brought to its knees for one simple reason. In a democracy the people eventually will rise up and have their way. That is the bottom line here. It is not whether Charlie Stenholm is a Congressman from west Texas. It is not really which party is going to win this high-stakes battle. It is about how the people are being represented, and I am hearing from the people all over Texas saying this is not right to do it as they are doing it. I realize TOM DELAY does not care a whit about how the people in rural west Texas are represented, but I do. I have become very passionate about not losing the rural focus of west Texas districts and under his plan, west Texas will lose one representative.

Mr. DELAY is quick to express his belief that I am irrelevant. The rural constituents of the 17th district feel a little differently. In fact, all of my Texas colleagues whom we have heard from today, as we look at the plans, rural Texas is being shorted by this plan.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the 53 in Ardmore for the courage they have shown for standing up for what they believe.

Pete Laney, David Farabee, I appreciate what they have done. Texas will be a better State because of the actions that they have taken on behalf of the people of Texas; and hopefully all of the legislature, both sides of the aisle, will come to their senses and will stop letting Washington determine how the Texas legislature should be run. Texans can take care of Texas.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 53 DEMOCRATS OF THE TEXAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CHOCOLA). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand here today in the U.S. House and say congratulations to our heroes, our 53 heroes in Texas of the Texas House of Representatives. They are fighting for some basic principles, the heroes of democracy. Texas Democrats have used the last tool provided to them. For so many of them from the Texas House to agree to walk out demonstrates the depth of their commitment, the strength of their purpose, and the nobility of their cause.

This is not just about a map. It is about a democratic process, participation in the rights of the minority to have a voice in the process. Republicans in Texas need to learn that having power and using it wisely are not the same thing. Rather than waste time on divisive redistricting schemes pushed on by the Washington Republican leaders, Texas Republicans should have focused on the truly pressing business before the Texas legislature and before Texas, such as issues of balancing the budget, such as the issues of encouraging economic growth, such as the issues of enhancing educational opportunities both for public education and higher education, as well as providing health care access to our children and families.

As Texans, we recognize that we have the largest number of uninsured in Texas, and we recognize that we need more resources. We ought to be trying to solve those issues rather than doing what is being done now.

So I want to take this time to congratulate them in putting their personal interests aside. These 53 Democrats, members of the Texas House of Representatives have said enough is enough. "Basta." United, these brave Texans have hailed and created and made move and have inspired all of Texas to do the right thing.

I want to take this time to recognize the newspapers and the editorials that have been in their favor. When we look at the Houston Chronicle editorials, the San Antonio editorials. And if I can, I will read the San Antonio Express-News editorial which summed it up when they said "... the House has pushed through a variety of measures that have more to do with the enthu-

siasms of ideologues than with the good of the State. A totally inadequate State budget is the most egregious sin."

"Coming in a close second is the blatantly partisan congressional redistricting scheme . . . concocted up by White House political guru Karl Rove and U.S. Representative TOM DELAY . . ." the Express-News indicated.

Taking these cues from the majority leader's office here in Washington, Texas Republicans want to deny Texas voters the choice they have to make. They want to impose a congressional quota. Texas voters said no, and now Texas Democrats say no.

If we look at my particular district, I am given close to 20 or 30 additional counties. At the present time I represent San Antonio and south; and if we look at the map, my district is completely wiped out and given to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA), who will go now all the way to Austin. My district from San Antonio was stretched 600 miles to the borders with New Mexico and takes 40-something thousand people from El Paso. If we look all the way from San Antonio all the way down to El Paso, over 600 miles. So when we look at those types of interests and we look at what has been done by the maps, we know that they are maps basically for purposes of grabbing power.

The law says that the States have an obligation to draw their lines during the process of the census. If the State chooses to do this now, it will set a very negative precedent. It will basically say that anytime someone else takes power and decides to gerrymander or knock off someone because they choose to get angry with them, they can redraw the lines at any time during the decade and come back and be able to change their lines so that someone else will not win.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank the members, especially those that I am really proud of, especially Representative Carlos Uresti, Representative Puente, Representative Guillen, and Representative Villarreal, and Representative Kino Flores.

HONORING THE 53 DEMOCRATS OF THE TEXAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, we have heard over the past 1½ to 2 hours a number of Members come to the floor of the House and cite a prestigious and prominent group of Americans known to us as the Texas Dems 53, Texas Dems 51, just plain brave Texans, sheroes and heroes and simply Americans.

The issue may be confusing because I might imagine that it becomes isolated as a finite, narrow political debate. But today in discussing this issue, I encour-

age individuals who are inquiring about this process to read the Madison papers to understand the process of debate that was the very underpinning of the Constitutional Convention that helped design this Nation and this democracy. If they would do that, they would understand that, in fact, those who are standing about the process that does not work in Texas are actually brave and important components to the history of this State and the history of this Nation.

It is extremely important to recognize that these individuals, 53 Democrats, have tried over and over again to be collegiate and collaborative in working on behalf of the interests of the people of Texas in the shadow of a war that was fought to promote the ideals of this Nation. Is it not shameful that these Democrats coming from all over the State of Texas, rural, urban and otherwise, is it not important to note that all they wanted to do is to represent their constituents?

On the question of the budget in Texas, they wanted to add amendments to protect those children who are being cut, 270,000 of them being cut, if the Members will, from the children's health insurance program. They wanted to stop the abusive restructuring of Medicaid so that less and less people could utilize the services. They wanted to make sure that we continued the access of the graduates of 2003 to the institutions of higher learning by funding those institutions of higher learning at higher percentages. Mr. Speaker, they wanted to do their job.

But yet, what was fostered upon them was an ugly redistricting map that could not be called anything but a grab of power, a denigration of the Voter Rights Act of 1965, a disrespect of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and an absolute coup d'etat as it relates to power in America. As so stated by the leader of this particular body, majority leader, we are in power in Austin, we are in power in Washington, there will be no compromise.

So those of us who are attempting to work on behalf of this State wondered why this kind of meat, if the Members will, cutter was used to draw the district, and frankly here is why. This is a district, the kind of district that we could almost imagine that the courts will find ridiculous. Here is the fifth ward of Texas where Barbara Jordan was born. We can see how it dips down into a totally unrelated district, catches it so it can go all the way here and become a district. Why? No one knows. But this is the ninth district; and it used to have NASA, hardworking people like the gentleman from Texas (Mr. LAMPSON) and of course his predecessors that have worked so hard to ensure the funding for NASA that Lyndon Baines Johnson originated on behalf of America.

All of a sudden now, this has moved out of the traditional communities of interest and moved into a district totally unrelated and happens to belong